



**BUTCHERBIRDS**

BY WREN DONOVAN

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I will go beyond reason, past the quiet gate, well-oiled.  
It allows an opening, access, through twin tracks of barbed wire,  
rusty with dried blood and insects left by birds and then forgotten.

Grasshoppers with crispy legs and large eyes tiled in pixels  
are impaled by shrikes, the butcherbirds.  
These carcass bugs disturb me with their deadish eyes  
and barbed long singing legs and greenish blood.  
They were as alive as I am

once. Elsewhere in my imagination's eye  
against a rusted Balkan sky, black mountains  
and a grisly fence, lines of tree trunks, charred,  
each with a dried-out head-bowed corpse, impaled there and  
forgotten, flapping black and white against the red.

Each pause between the posts provides a gate  
to curiosity and fear. Each tree-barb rusts with salty blood  
and raindrops carried on in veins of mothers.  
Hungry shrike, unlucky bug, pale mourner or marauder  
passing, we all are monsters, faceless in the mirror.

